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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews some of the principal methodological issues that arise in studying nonresident fathers using surveys, including sample frame, survey participation, and response error. The review focuses on issues involving divorced families. Results are highlighted from analyses of important national data sets and of local data sets that include a record-check component. The findings reviewed point to some of the challenges that arise when attempting to describe fathers' points of view using survey data. The most obvious is the challenge of improving participation rates among both fathers and mothers, but particularly among fathers and particularly among some subgroups of fathers, such as those who do not pay support. Nonparticipation bias is clearly an important issue for some estimates, such as the mean amount of child support paid. Although the evidence is less conclusive, it appears that nonparticipation bias may be less of a problem in estimating relationships among variables, such as the factors predicting child support payments. In addition to the problems raised by nonparticipation, the studies reviewed here suggest that for some variables, such as the amount of child support paid, response error may be more serious for fathers than for mothers. Because social desirability pressures appear to contribute to this response error, it is plausible that such errors affect constructs such as "contact" for which there is no criterion in the same way that they affect constructs for which a criterion is available. Research using social-information-processing models to study response errors may suggest ways to improve the accuracy of answers provided by both fathers and mothers. None of the studies reviewed here estimate the impact of response errors on model estimates, but such effects can be expected to be substantial. (Contains 15 tables and 28 references.) (Author/SLD)

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Methodological and Theoretical Issues in Studying Nonresident Fathers: A Selective Review

WP-98-02
February 1998

by

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Judith A. Seltzer
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PREFACE

Not since the 1960s and 1970s—when research in the field was at a peak—have family issues captured as much attention or sparked as much wide-scale debate as they have in recent years. Casting its net to address a variety of problems that fall outside the typical domains of psychology and sociology (where much of the early work was located), research on families is part of a growing interdisciplinary focus which is no longer simply implicated in questions about family development. Rather, the present interdisciplinary focus of the field attempts to respond to massive changes in the needs, structures, poverty levels, and formation patterns of families and the policies that are designed to remedy the increasingly complex problems they face.

A significant and compelling part of research on families over the past 20 years explores the impact of father involvement and father absence on children's development and complements much of the existing research on issues in other areas—e.g., female-headed households, poverty, social welfare, and public policy. In particular, the potential impact of family support legislation, national welfare reform agendas, and persistent systemic problems at local and state levels lend a sense of urgency to the research discussion about father participation in families. What is noticeably lacking in these discussions, however, is a focus on programs that serve fathers and families and the voices of practitioners.

The issues defining and surrounding research and practice on fathers and families are complex. Nested in each issue are multiple layers of questions about the problems facing young fathers, mothers, and families; the needs of programs and the practitioners who work in them; changes in national, state, and local policies; and the nature of the tasks facing society. Although there is substantial discussion about the impact of father absence, research studies provide only modest evidence for the negative consequences of father absence on children and typically attribute these negative effects to reduced family income resulting from separation or divorce. There are only sparse data on families that deviate from "traditional, intact" family forms such as families headed by adolescent or young, adult never-married, and/or poor mothers. Research on families of color, outside of poverty studies, are still conspicuously meager in the knowledge base.

The work of the National Center on Fathers and Families (NCOFF) uses the strengths and voids in these research discussions as a launching pad to develop a framework for research, practice, and policy—to promote the building of a field in which the needs of children and families are the core of the discourse and research and practice cohere to craft the language and activities associated with that discourse. NCOFF aims to bring together these issues within a research and collaborative effort on behalf of children and their families.

Established in July 1994 with core funding from The Annie E. Casey Foundation, NCOFF's mission is to improve the life chances of children and the efficacy of families by facilitating the effective involvement of fathers. Developed in the spirit of the Philadelphia Children's Network's (PCN) motto, "Help the children. Fix the system.", NCOFF

seeks to increase and enrich the possibilities for children, ensuring that they are helped and that the system allows for and encourages the participation of fathers in their children's lives. NCOFF shares with PCN and other field activities the premises that children need loving, nurturing families; that mothers and families in general need to be supported in providing nurturance; and that family support efforts should increase the ability of both parents and adults within and outside the biological family to contribute to children's development and well-being.

NCOFF's mission is developed around seven **Core Learnings**. The Core Learnings provide the context for NCOFF's research agenda. This research agenda is intended to support the field in the development, conduct, and advancement of research, practice, and responsive policies. Research activities are designed to synthesize work from multiple disciplines, provide current analyses, and examine emerging conceptualizations in the field. In this and all of its work, NCOFF recognizes that the scope of need in the field requires a variety of approaches and the commitment and collective effort of different communities.

This Monograph is intended to highlight critical and emerging topics in the field that have received minimal attention and that complement issues identified in the NCOFF FatherLit Database, Briefs, critical literature reviews, and research reports. The Database combines citation lists, annotated bibliographies, and abstracts of research articles, reports, and volumes that focus on issues implied in the Core Learnings. All NCOFF documents are written and reviewed by scholars representing multiple disciplines and research interests in fathers and families. Information about the NCOFF Database, the literature reviews and analyses, working papers, and other NCOFF documents and activities is currently available on HandsNet and through our website.

Embedded in NCOFF's mission is a vision in which fathers, families, and communities are positioned to ensure the well-being of children and are able to translate their hope and the possibilities that accompany that hope into human and social prosperity. A well-coordinated national effort on fathers and families will give support and a collective voice to programs, encourage research, and contribute to responsive policy formulation. Such a vehicle would provide the appropriate context for experience-sharing among researchers, practitioners, and policymakers; identification of basic research, program, and policy-related issues; surfacing of new research issues; and increased opportunities for communication, cooperation, and collaboration.

Vivian L. Gadsden
Director

SEVEN CORE LEARNINGS

- Fathers care — even if that caring is not shown in conventional ways.
- Father presence matters — in terms of economic well-being, social support, and child development.
- Joblessness is a major impediment to family formation and father involvement.
- Existing approaches to public benefits, child support enforcement, and paternity establishment operate to create systemic obstacles and disincentives to father involvement. The disincentives are sufficiently compelling as to have prompted the emergence of a phenomenon dubbed "underground fathers"—men who acknowledge paternity and are involved in the lives of their children but who refuse to participate as fathers in the formal systems.
- A growing number of young fathers and mothers need additional support to develop the vital skills to share the responsibility for parenting.
- The transition from biological father to committed parent has significant development implications for young fathers.
- The behaviors of young parents, both fathers and mothers, are influenced significantly by intergenerational beliefs and practices within families of origin.

The seven Core Learnings are at the heart of NCOFF's agenda for research, practice, and policy and are a framework for the field. They represent the knowledge and experience of practitioners who confront complex problems facing fathers and families and are consistent with research across multiple disciplines. They offer an important lens through which policymakers might learn more about the implications and impact of legislation and policy decisions on the lives of large numbers of fathers, mothers, children, and families. Within them are captured salient issues experienced and felt deeply by a range of fathers and families—from those who are financially secure to those who are the most vulnerable to poverty and hardship.

The Core Learnings were identified immediately prior to NCOFF's inception by frontline practitioners in a series of survey and focus group activities conducted by the Philadelphia Children's Network and NCOFF. Formulated first as seven hypotheses drawn from practitioners' experiences in programs serving fathers and families, each hypothesis was tested against existing published research and policy studies. As each hypothesis was borne out in the literature, it became a Core Learning. A library of information was developed for each. The resultant seven libraries now constitute the NCOFF FatherLit Database and include over 7,000 citations, annotations, and abstracts of research, available in written, diskette, and electronic form.

National Center on Fathers and Families

Methodological and Theoretical Issues in Studying Nonresident Fathers: A Selective Review

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Abstract

Much of what we know about separated families has been based on reports of mothers in surveys. Relying on mothers' reports appears particularly problematic when separated families are studied. This paper reviews some of the principal methodological issues that arise in studying nonresident fathers using surveys, including sample frame, survey participation, and response error. The review focuses on issues involving divorced families. Results are highlighted from analyses of important national data sets and of local data sets that include a record-check component. The findings reviewed here point to some of the challenges that arise when attempting to describe fathers' points of view using survey data. The most obvious is the challenge of improving participation rates among both fathers and mothers, but particularly among fathers, and particularly among some subgroups of fathers, such as those who do not pay support. Nonparticipation bias is clearly an important issue for some estimates, such as the mean amount of child support paid. Although the evidence is less conclusive, it appears that nonparticipation bias may be less of a problem in estimating relationships among variables, such as the factors predicting child support payments. In addition to the problems raised by nonparticipation, the studies reviewed here suggest that for some variables, such as amounts of child support paid, response error may be more serious for fathers than for mothers. Because social desirability pressures appear to contribute to this response error, it is plausible that such errors affect constructs such as "contact" for which we do not have a criterion in the same way that they affect constructs for which a criterion is available. Research using social-information-processing models to study response errors may suggest ways to improve the accuracy of answers provided by both fathers and mothers. It should be noted that none of the studies reviewed here estimate the impact of response errors on model estimates, but such effects can be expected to be substantial.

The National Center on Fathers and Families (NCOFF) is a policy research center that is practice-focused and practice-derived. Based in the Graduate School of Education at the University of Pennsylvania, NCOFF's mission is to improve the life chances of children and the efficacy of families by facilitating the effective involvement of fathers in caring for, supporting, and advocating on behalf of their children. Efforts are organized around three interdependent approaches: a policy research and policymakers engagement component, program development, and dissemination activities. NCOFF's research plan is developed around seven "Core Learnings," distilled from the experiences of programs and agencies serving fathers, mothers, and children around the country.

NCOFF activities are funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, which provides core support, the Ford Foundation, and the Mott Foundation.

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Methodological and Theoretical Issues in Studying Nonresident Fathers: A Selective Review

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Changes in the structure of the family over recent decades have resulted in new challenges for researchers attempting to describe the problems faced by those families. In particular, when parents live apart from their children, more than one household must be described in order to describe a single family.[1] One of the principal methods used by researchers to describe the contemporary family is the sample survey. One of the principal contributions of sample surveys to our understanding of family life is the capacity they provide for estimating characteristics of the population from which the sample is drawn. Such estimates play a critical role in providing portraits of family life (e.g., the proportion of families in which there is only one resident parent), in monitoring the impact of changes in social policy (e.g., whether the proportion of separated families that have child support orders is increasing), and in studying causal relationships. Because surveys are important to studies of family life, researchers relying on them must assess their strengths and weaknesses where possible. The fact that the quality of survey data can sometimes be directly evaluated is, in fact, one of the strengths of surveys. In this review, we examine some of the issues raised by using survey data to study contemporary families in a way that includes fathers as well as mothers.

Researchers examining contemporary family life have often used reports about families provided by mothers (see, for example, discussion in Thomson and Williams 1982). Although the problems (however substantial and substantively important) raised by relying on reports by mothers might go unremarked when the families under study are intact, the potential problems become obvious when the families being examined are separated. In this paper we review issues raised in using either mothers or fathers—or both—to study separated families. The principal issues are those that arise in designing and implementing a sample and those that arise in the process of measurement.

With respect to obtaining an appropriate sample, two central concerns are selecting an appropriate sample frame (that is, a list of members of the universe from which the sample will be drawn) and obtaining high levels of participation from all groups (for example, whites and blacks, divorced and nonmarital families, employed and unemployed) in the sample. The most important issue in measurement is probably the relative or absolute accuracy of the reports of fathers and mothers. When parents provide different evaluations of the same event, their different evaluations reflect their different perspectives. But when mothers and fathers are reporting about the same event, such as the amount of child support paid, their reports should, in principle, be the same. Although some of the problems caused by nonparticipation and measurement error that we review here have long been recognized, there is little research on these topics because they are difficult to study. One difficulty is finding criteria to use in estimating the errors. Thus, many of the studies that we review include a "record-check" in which answers to a survey question are compared to information in another source, usually records kept by the court. Even though such records also contain error, they at least provide an independent comparison.

This paper reviews central studies that address the methodological issues that arise in studying separated families. Two types of survey have been used in this research: household samples and state or county samples that select cases from the court system and that include a record-check component that compares survey answers to information recorded by the court. A description of the principal data sets used in the studies here follows; only brief descriptions are provided for major national data sets that are widely documented and distributed. Because the analyses used here often rely on subsets of the entire data set, relevant sample sizes are given in the tables that accompany the discussion.

The principal household studies discussed here are the following:

Current Population Survey (CPS). This national household-based panel study conducted by the Bureau of the Census for the Bureau of Labor Statistics includes a supplement about child support for the Office of Child Support Enforcement every two years (see Cherlin, Griffith, and McCarthy 1983). At the time the data summarized here were collected, interviews were conducted in person.

Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP). This national household-based panel study conducted by the Bureau of the Census includes a topical module about child support in some years in which interviews were conducted (see Sorensen 1995). At the time the data summarized here were collected, interviews were conducted in person.

National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH). This 1987-88 national probability sample of adults in households is a panel study that used personal interviews in the first wave. The first wave includes unmatched samples of resident and nonresident parents (see Seltzer and Brandreth 1995). The follow-up, approximately six years after the original interview, includes a small sample of matched resident and nonresident parents.

National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY). This is a national sample of persons 14 to 22 years old in 1979. Until recently, interviews were conducted annually. The design includes unmatched samples of fathers and mothers (see Veum 1993; Sorensen 1995).

Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID). This long-running panel survey is concerned primarily with topics related to income, poverty, and family dynamics. It began with 5,000 families in 1968. In 1994 the study was augmented in a way that provides a sample of matched parents from separated families (see Smock and Manning 1996).

Wisconsin Survey of Children, Incomes, and Program Participation (CHIPPS). This 1984 telephone survey of Wisconsin residents with an oversample of resident and nonresident parents used a Random Digit Dialing (RDD) sample frame (see MacDonald 1986).

The county-based studies discussed here include the following:

Wisconsin Child Support Demonstration Evaluation. This project provides several data sets that were used in the studies summarized here: the Court Record Database (CRD), the Parent Survey 1 (PS1), and the Parent Survey 2 (PS2). The CRD is a sample of court cases with a child eligible for child support that were filed in twenty Wisconsin counties over several years, so that the data set is structured in cohorts, with cohort defined by the year the case was filed with the court. The counties were selected to represent the distribution of economic and demographic characteristics of Wisconsin. In most cohorts, cases were sampled sequentially

within each county. The CRD records information from the court record, including information about child support orders and payments. Cases from several cohorts were subsequently sampled and interviews were attempted with both parents in two telephone surveys. The PS1 included cases that originated between 1984 and 1986 and was conducted in 1987; the PS2 included cases that originated in 1986 through 1988 and was conducted in 1989. (See Dykema 1996; Schaeffer, Seltzer, and Klawitter 1991; Schaeffer 1994; Lin and Schaeffer 1995; Lin, Schaeffer, and Seltzer 1997.)

Arizona Noncustodial Parent Project. This is a sample of court cases selected at random from those filing for divorce in 1986 in Maricopa County in which there was at least one child under 15 years of age. In the initial stages of interviewing, a mother from a family was only interviewed if the father had already been interviewed. The large majority of interviews were conducted in person. (See Bay and Braver 1990; Braver, Wolchik, Sandler, Fogas, and Zvetina 1991; Braver, Fitzpatrick, and Bay 1991; Braver and Bay 1992.)

Pilot Survey of Absent Parents (SOAP). The sample design for the SOAP pilot study used two different sample frames (child support enforcement records and court records) in two different states (Florida and Ohio). Both samples included as eligible cases that entered the frame one to three years before the sample selection date. Divorce cases without an agreement for child support or maintenance were excluded (Sonenstein and Calhoun 1988, p. 11). The design includes matched and unmatched resident and nonresident parents. Interviews were conducted face-to-face between November 1985 and February 1986 (Rubin, O'Brien, and Sudman 1988).

The Stanford Child Custody Study. This is a longitudinal sample of divorce cases filed in Santa Clara County and San Mateo County in California between September 1984 and March 1985 (Maccoby and Mnookin 1992). Attempts were made to interview both mothers and fathers in these cases.

Because the most common arrangement is still for the children to be placed with the mother during the majority of the year, the available research is best suited for considering the problems that arise in studying nonresident fathers and resident mothers. In addition, this research is better suited to studying families that are separated because of divorce, although we will comment on issues that arise in studying nonmarital families.

SAMPLING AND PARTICIPATION: ERRORS OF NONOBSERVATION

Sample Frame Issues and Coverage Bias. The two principal types of sample frame that can be used to study separated families are probability samples of households and samples from lists of separated families that have been to court. Each type of sample frame—household frames and lists of court cases—offers different strengths and weaknesses. As the discussion below indicates, area probability household samples and random digit dialing (RDD) household samples share many features, although RDD samples include only households affluent and stable enough to have telephones, and are thus subject to a coverage error that area probability samples (in which interviewing is typically done in person) are not.

Samples of households have the great advantage that they can include both families that have been to court and families that have not, making them particularly appropriate for studying families in which the parents never married. Household samples also typically include cases for much larger geographic areas than are usually available for court-based samples. This means that house-

hold samples often include families that originated under different policy regimes in different states. In addition, cross-sectional household samples include cases of different "ages" and so include cases that originated under different historical policy regimes. Household samples are thus likely to include cases that originated under different geographic and historic policy regimes in proportions that reflect the composition of the population of separated families as a whole.

Although this diversity has many advantages, it means that household samples must be very large to include enough separated families to support detailed analysis that controls for different policy regimes by state and policy changes over time. Matched pairs of parents can be included in household samples only by augmenting the original sample. This augmentation requires asking respondents to identify (and help locate) a former spouse or partner with whom the respondent parented a child. In addition, the sample frame (that is, the list from which the sample is drawn) typically provides no information (for example, on family structure) that could be used to evaluate how successful the study has been in reaching the targeted categories of households or household members. This is because it cannot be determined which households include nonresident or resident parents until the household is "screened" for sampling purposes. Because some of the information that is useful for evaluating a sample is sensitive (such as nonmarital births), it may be inappropriate to request at the time the household is being screened.[2] Finally, in all household samples, the information used to determine parental status for sampling or analysis is subject to response error, a fact that makes it very difficult to evaluate the success of screening efforts.

Using a list of court cases as a sample frame has different advantages. If separated families are the researcher's principal interest, the researcher can, in principle, draw a probability sample of as many cases as the researcher's budget allows without incurring the costs of screening. Matched pairs of parents can be easily sampled (although not necessarily easily located), and both divorced and nonmarital families can be sampled through the courts (but see discussion below of the selectivity of nonmarital families sampled through the courts). The court records used as the frame may also supply information that can be used to locate parents. In addition, information from the courts may help the researcher to evaluate both how similar the set of ultimate respondents is to the sample as a whole (that is, the "representativeness" of the achieved sample), and the quality of the answers provided by those who are actually interviewed (see discussion of response errors below).

Some features of court-based samples are advantages for some research goals but are limitations for others. Court cases have a "cohort" structure: cases filed at a given time are considered by the courts under roughly the same policy regime and by the same set of judges, and will vary relatively little (compared to a cross-sectional household sample) in the time since separation (in the case of divorces) or since birth of the child (in the case of nonmarital families). In addition, samples of court cases usually include only a few geographic areas, because drawing such samples requires a researcher to visit county court houses. Holding constant such variables as policy regime is useful for some purposes, but researchers must then consider whether their results can be generalized, for example, to the policy regimes in effect in other states.

Implementation of samples of court cases must also consider such problems as misfiled cases, multiple cases involving the same parents (particularly in paternity cases), idiosyncrasies of the court's record-keeping, seasonality in filing for divorce and paternity actions, and so on. Finally, a sample of divorce cases obtained through the courts is likely to represent reasonably well those families in which the parents married, but the sample of nonmarital families is more highly selected

than a sample of nonmarital families obtained using a household frame.

Nonmarital families typically become "court cases" (and thus vulnerable to being found on a court-based sample frame) because an action has been filed to establish paternity. Nonmarital families in which paternity has been established are likely to differ from nonmarital families in which paternity has not been established. Data from the NSFH suggest some of the differences between nonmarital families that have been to court and those that have not. Using this national household sample, Seltzer (1997) found that paternity establishment was more likely among families in which parents eventually married than in families that were to remain unmarried. Paternity establishment was also more likely among mothers with at least a high school education, compared to those without a high school degree. To the extent that mothers' education affects family relationships, these patterns suggest substantial selectivity among those who enter the court system, compared to all nonmarital families. Because the quality of parents' relationship with each other is likely to be correlated with fathers' involvement with children (visiting, child support payments, etc.), court record samples exclude, by definition, an important subgroup of nonmarital families (Seltzer 1997). Thus, adequate studies of nonmarital families require household-based samples. Because this group is a relatively small proportion of the population, such samples would require extensive screening.

Household Samples: Identifying Noncustodial Fathers. Studying separated families using household samples presents the immediate problem of identifying eligible parents, that is, parents with children who live apart from them. This is typically done with "screening" or "filter" questions that ask whether an adult in the household has a child who has a parent who lives somewhere else[3] (when screening for resident parents) or whether an adult in the household has a child who lives elsewhere (when screening for nonresident parents), or some similarly identifying questions.[4] Depending on the survey design, the screening questions may be asked of a household informant for every adult in the household, or the questions may be asked of or about a selected adult. Such screening questions are subject to response error, and the causes and extent of response error may be different for resident and nonresident parents, and for divorced and nonmarital families. Furthermore, the questions needed to establish eligibility for the survey may appear more sensitive to a respondent in a telephone survey than to a respondent in a face-to-face survey.

One possible source of error arises from the use of proxy responses for these screening questions. In the household of a resident parent, any adult who might serve as an informant for screening in a survey is likely to know that the household includes a child who has a nonresident parent living elsewhere. But in the household of a nonresident parent, other adults may not have been informed that the nonresident parent has a child who lives outside the household.

Even when proxy responses are not used, the presence of the child in the resident parent's household means that the child (and the resident parent) is likely to be identified. For some nonresident parents, a child who lives elsewhere may go unreported because the parental status or the relationship with the child is not salient, or because it is painful to think about, or because the parent has concealed the child's existence from others in the household.

Table 1 addresses issues that arise in identifying resident mothers and nonresident fathers in previously married families by comparing estimates from the April 1979 Child Support Supplement to the CPS for mothers and the June 1980 CPS supplement on fertility and marital histories

(Cherlin, Griffith, and McCarthy 1983). In the 1979 Child Support Supplement, divorced or separated women were asked how many of their children under 21 in the household were fathered or adopted by their divorced or separated husband. The interviewer then asked questions about child support. In the 1980 supplement, the interviewer asked the household informant, for each man aged 15 to 75 who was currently widowed, separated, or divorced or who was in a second or later marriage, if the man had "any children from a previous marriage who are less than 18 years old?" The interviewer then asked if he provided financial support for the children.

Cherlin, Griffith, and McCarthy (1983) find that the number of men providing support is similar to the number of women receiving support in the two data sources, but that the total number of men with children living elsewhere is smaller than would be expected given the number of women who report such children. They conclude that procedural differences between the two surveys are unlikely to account for the pattern they find. Rather, they note, the screening question is unanswered for a large proportion (17 percent) of the men, either because a proxy informant did not know the information or because the man himself refused to answer the question. Thus, they conclude that response error is likely to be the source of the discrepancy.[5]

A useful comparison is Sorensen's (1995) analysis of the 1990 SIPP, which identifies noncustodial fathers in a different way. Sorensen compares the proportion of men who were noncustodial fathers in the 1990 SIPP with the comparable proportion from the NLSY and with the proportion of women identified as custodial parents in SIPP. Her analysis identifies as noncustodial fathers those who make child support payments or who report having more children (on a fertility history) than currently live with them (these definitions are then subjected to a set of careful restrictions). She concludes that among noninstitutionalized men, the "SIPP is equally able to identify noncustodial fathers as the NLSY" (1995, p. 20). But she also finds that the SIPP identifies 15 percent fewer noncustodial fathers than custodial mothers, and that this difference is largely concentrated among blacks, where the number of noncustodial fathers identified is 56 percent of the number of custodial mothers (1995, pp. 20-21). The probable reasons for the discrepancy are that black men are likely to be underrepresented in the SIPP, that they are less likely than other men to answer the fertility questions, and that they underreport noncustodial fatherhood even when they answer the fertility questions (1995, p. 24).

Screening issues also arise in household samples that use telephone sample frames, and are probably aggravated by asking potentially sensitive screening questions over the telephone. An illustration is the Wisconsin CHIPPS. A listing of household members was completed with an adult who answered the telephone, and screening questions were then asked to determine whether any of the adults were resident or nonresident parents. The design of the CHIPPS survey included an oversample of households with resident and nonresident parents; that is, after a cross-sectional sample of sufficient size was obtained, additional telephone numbers were dialed and screening questions were asked to identify households with custodial and noncustodial parents so that there would be a sufficient number of those groups for separate analysis. Table 2 shows that in both the original cross-sectional sample and the oversample, approximately twice as many households were identified as including a resident parent as were identified as including a nonresident parent.

Nonparticipants and Nonparticipation Bias. Both household and court-based samples are subject to nonparticipation. The causes of nonparticipation that are relevant depend on the sample

frame. For household samples, "locating" respondents is not an issue, because the address (in area probability designs) or telephone number (in RDD designs) of the potential respondent is identified,[6] although screening questions that identify target respondents are subject to response error as we have just described. For list samples, such as court-based samples, locating selected respondents becomes a problem. In addition, all types of samples can be compromised because of a failure to contact a selected respondent (although this is a more significant issue for household samples) or because of refusals.

Any resulting nonparticipation bias in estimates of means and proportions will be a function of the proportion of the selected sample that did not respond and the difference between participants and nonparticipants. Even a relatively high participation rate can result in substantial nonparticipation bias if those who do not participate are very different from those who do. Furthermore, nonparticipation bias in sample estimates may vary for different statistics: even if estimates of means are biased, estimates of relationships may not be (see discussion below; compare, for example, Schaeffer, Seltzer, and Klawitter 1991 and Lin, Schaeffer, and Seltzer 1997).

Other issues in assessing nonparticipation bias include the correct computation of response rates and variation in response rates across subgroups in the sample. In household samples, computation of response rates is complicated because if a household has not been screened, the eligibility of the household cannot be determined. In RDD designs there is the additional complication that some telephone numbers are never answered, and so it cannot even be determined if the number rings in a household. (For a discussion of response rate calculation see Hidiroglou, Drew, and Gray 1993.)

Court-Based Samples: Participation Rates. Because court records offer an independent source of information about selected study participants, court-based samples offer an opportunity for evaluating the impact of nonparticipation on survey estimates, and, because response rates are typically low, such an assessment appears to be needed. Braver and Bay (1992, p. 928) document the low response rates that plague many studies of separated families. Of the thirteen studies they review, the highest response rate is 39.5 percent. Using a procedure parallel to that recommended by CASRO (Council of American Survey Research Organizations 1982) for telephone surveys, they estimate the response rate for their face-to-face interviews of fathers in the Arizona Noncustodial Parent Project as between 47 and 51 percent. In analyses from these data that use information from both mothers and fathers in the same court case (i.e., a "matched" sample), however, we estimate a response rate that is considerably lower for the matched sample—between 25 and 27 percent.[7]

The Wisconsin PS1 and PS2 telephone surveys fared better. For divorce cases in the PS1, response rates were approximately 58 percent for fathers, 65 percent for mothers, 43 percent for couples, and 79 percent for families. For divorce cases in the PS2, response rates were approximately 58 percent for fathers, 67 percent for mothers, 43 percent for couples, and 82 percent for families (unpublished project memorandum, 1996). For paternity cases, response rates were approximately 5 percent lower for mothers, and approximately 10 percent lower for fathers.

The pilot for the SOAP study interviewed approximately 63 percent of noncustodial parents, 80 percent of custodial parents (Rubin, O'Brien, and Sudman 1988, p. 54), and both parents in 46 percent of the selected cases.[8]

In the Stanford Child Custody Study, approximately 61 percent of the cases that were pursued were located and about 57 percent of eligible families were recruited (Maccoby and Mnookin

1992, p. 318).

These results suggest that participation rates are likely to be higher for mothers than for fathers, and raises the possibility that nonparticipation bias will be greater for samples of fathers than for samples of mothers (and greatest for samples of matched couples). Although response rates of court-based samples are difficult to compare with those of household samples—because the household samples cannot classify a potential respondent as a resident or nonresident parent until she or he is interviewed—it seems likely that there will be important similarities between nonparticipating parents in both types of sample. Thus, for example, parents who refuse to participate in a household sample may be similar to those who refuse in a court-based sample, and parents who are difficult to contact in a household sample may be difficult to locate in a court-based sample. This inference is compatible with the conclusion of Bumpass, Castro Martin, and Sweet (1991) that difficulties (problems in contacting or refusals) in interviewing currently married or divorced men account, in part, for the poor quality of the marital histories in the NSFH.

Court-based Samples: Describing Nonparticipants. Just as the sources of nonparticipation are varied, so may be nonparticipants. For example, those who refuse are likely to be different from those who are difficult to locate. The proportion of nonparticipants of each type is likely to depend on the level of field efforts—the sources of information and budget available for contacting and locating respondents and converting refusals—and the "age" of the sample when it is drawn initially. Information from the court is more likely to be useful in locating parents when they are located soon after the court petition is filed or in locating parents who pay their support obligations.

Types of nonparticipants that might occur in a court-based sample and some of the difficulties that arise in analyzing such data are shown in table 3 (see Lin and Schaeffer 1993; Lin and Schaeffer 1995), which shows mean annual dollars of child support paid or received as recorded in the CRD for respondents with different survey outcomes. (The table also shows data from self-reports from the PS1, which will be discussed below.) Using the CRD as a criterion, divorced mothers who refuse appear to receive more child support than those who are easy to locate and interview, and these groups receive more child support than those who were not located. For divorced fathers, those who were not located appear to pay less support than those with other outcomes. The pattern is similar for reports about child support owed. But because many of the groups are small, even apparently large differences between groups may not be statistically significant (see Lin and Schaeffer 1993 for discussion of significance tests).

Braver and Bay (1992) also compare characteristics recorded by the court for fathers who were interviewed, were not located, or who refused (see table 4). Panel A presents results for variables available in court petitions; panel B presents results for variables from divorce decrees, which were coded for only a sample of those who were not located or refused. The results in panel A suggest that these groups have similar family characteristics. The data in panel B also suggest that the groups are similar, particularly with respect to the amount of child support owed. Comparing the number of cases in panel A to the number of cases in panel B, however, it seems that there is substantial missing data for amounts of child support owed, and it is also possible that the proportion of cases with missing data differs for the three groups of nonrespondents.

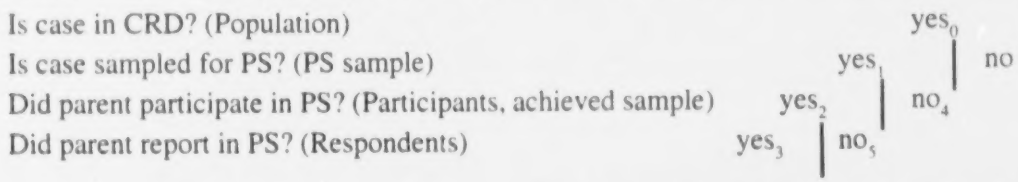
Schaeffer, Seltzer, and Klawitter (1991) found that the amount of child support owed was less vulnerable to nonparticipation bias than amounts of child support paid. This may be because child

support guidelines adopted by the court for setting awards make the awards relatively homogeneous across subgroups in the population. For characteristics that might be expected to be more strongly associated with the processes leading to survey nonparticipation, Braver and Bay (1992) do find differences among their three groups: for example, among participants, legal custody is more likely to be mother-only or joint, visitation specifications are more likely to be specific, and uncovered medical expenses are more likely to be specified as divided equally. The key variable of the amount of child support paid, which Schaeffer, Seltzer, and Klawitter found to be more vulnerable to nonparticipation bias than amounts owed, is not available in the Arizona Noncustodial Parent Project.[9]

Court-Based Samples: Describing Nonparticipation Bias. Table 5 shows how information from the court record, which is available for both participants and nonparticipants, can be used to assess the extent of nonparticipation bias in estimates of mean amounts of child support received or paid by divorced custodial mothers and noncustodial fathers respectively. The data are drawn from the Wisconsin CRD and the PS1, referred to as PS in table 5 (see Schaeffer, Seltzer, and Klawitter 1991 for details). This illustration focuses on the amount of child support paid, because parents are required to pay child support through the court system; information from the survey was used to verify that the court's records are a good criterion for this variable. In addition, the amount of child support paid is frequently used as a dependent variable, so that self-selection on this variable is particularly problematic for model estimation.

For this illustrative analysis, we consider the full set of court cases in the CRD from which the PS sample was drawn as the population, and the value of a variable recorded in the CRD as the population value for that court case. We do not examine the extent to which the CRD sample itself is like the population from which it is drawn. The difference between a mean calculated from a survey and its population value is the estimate of bias in the statistic, and we decompose this estimate of bias into three components: nonparticipation, item nonresponse, and response bias. To estimate total bias and its components, we calculate univariate statistics for subsets of the CRD using information from the court record (CRD) and from the telephone interviews (PS1).

The diagram below presents a hierarchical classification of CRD cases that constitute the population for this analysis. The classification is based on participation in the PS1 and availability of PS1 and CRD values, and the diagram defines the notation used to describe the analysis. In the diagram, "no" indicates that a value for a variable is unavailable for the reason given, "yes" indicates that a value is available, and the subscripts 1-5 are used to refer to the cells in the table:



The 0 cell represents the population—all cases in the CRD used as the sampling frame for the PS1. CRD_0 represents a statistic calculated for all the CRD cases using CRD information. For example, cell 3 includes cases for which payments are recorded in the CRD, who participated in the PS1, and who answered the item about support paid or received; CRD_3 refers to the mean of payments based on CRD

values for persons in cell 3; PS_3 refers to a statistic based on PS1 values for persons in cell 3.

Using this notation, the sample-specific difference between the true value in the population and the true value in the sample for proportions and means based on the PS is estimated as CRD_0-CRD_1. For this analysis, CRD_0 is used only to estimate the sample-specific sampling error. CRD_1 is the statistic based on all cases in the PS sample using CRD information; it is used to estimate nonsampling biases. The table displays CRD_1 rather than CRD_0 to omit the sample-specific sampling error from the estimate of bias. We estimate the components of bias as follows:

Total nonsampling bias=Nonparticipation bias+Item nonresponse bias+Response bias

$$(PS_3\text{-}CRD_1)=(CRD_2\text{-}CRD_1)+(CRD_3\text{-}CRD_2)+(PS_3\text{-}CRD_3).$$

The analysis uses estimates based on the cases in cells 1 through 3 in the diagram; cells 4 and 5 are presented to describe nonparticipants and item nonrespondents.

The first five and last two columns of the table show means and standard deviations calculated for different groups in the sample from the court records (CRD) and the PS1 (labeled "PS" in the table) for the amount of child support paid in 1986. Estimates of bias are calculated by comparing these estimates, as shown in the table, under the assumption that the set of CRD cases is a "population" that has been sampled for the PS1. The analysis indicates that nonparticipation bias is about 5 percent of the "population" mean for divorced custodial mothers (132/2767) and about 16 percent for divorced noncustodial fathers (450/2767), because fathers who do not participate pay less on average (according to the CRD) than nonparticipating mothers receive (according to the CRD) on average.

In other analyses that Schaeffer, Seltzer, and Klawitter (1991) report, nonparticipation bias was lowest for estimates of the proportion owing any child support for both mothers and fathers. Nonparticipation bias in estimates of the proportion paying any child support was twice as large for fathers as mothers, and for the average amount owed was negligible for mothers, but ten times larger for fathers. A comparison of the analysis of bias in reports about amounts of child support owed and paid suggests that nonparticipation bias is greater in reports about support paid. This is probably because the legal principles involved in establishing child support orders are applied in *relatively* similar ways to all families, and so are not subject to the same types of self-selection that both paying support and survey participation are. To some degree, paying child support and participating in a survey may respond to the same influences: for example, factors that make it harder for the courts to locate a parent also make it more difficult for an interviewer to locate a parent; similarly, factors that lead a parent not to pay child support (e.g., unemployment) may make the parent more difficult to locate or more likely to refuse. This is potentially significant in analyses that use the payment of child support as a dependent variable—both paying child support and the amount paid appear to be associated with survey participation, and more so for fathers than for mothers.

Even when estimates of means are biased by nonparticipation, estimates of relationships may not be. Braver and Bay (1992) review techniques for adjusting for nonparticipation. Although Braver and Bay conclude that "all the compensation techniques had relatively similar (and relatively minor) impact, especially on the relationship coefficients" (1992, p. 937), this result depends on the characteristics available in the court records that are used in the adjustments and may also vary for different survey variables. Furthermore, the analysis examines adjustments for all interviewed fathers, not just those whose former spouse was also interviewed, and so the conclusions

cannot be generalized to their analyses using the "matched" sample, for which the response rate was substantially lower, as we have seen.

In an analysis of the CRD and PS2, Lin, Schaeffer, and Seltzer (1997) find that the factors predicting the probability that a father will be located differ somewhat from the factors predicting the probability that a located father will participate. Despite the relatively low response rate for fathers (see discussion above), and the fact that nonparticipation bias in estimates of the mean of child support paid from the PS2 is likely to be similar to that in the PS1 described above, they also find that using a model that takes the selectivity of the PS2 sample into account does not change estimates of the effects of factors predicting the amount of child support that fathers pay.

Household Samples: Selecting Analytic Samples. An innovative approach to dealing with possible self-selection is to use independent variables to identify a subpopulation of analytic interest for which self-selection is likely to be less severe than for the sample as a whole, and for which the processes leading to participation are more likely to be similar for mothers and fathers. Using data from the NSFH, Seltzer and Brandreth (1995) selected divorced families with resident mothers and nonresident fathers for whom the randomly selected focal child in the survey was born in their first marriage. This procedure omits nonmarital families from the analysis. As the previous discussion suggests, nonmarital fathers are underrepresented in surveys; they are harder to find and to interview than divorced fathers, perhaps because nonmarital fathers are less likely to have steady employment. In addition, some nonresident fathers of children born outside of marriages may not know that they are biological fathers. Panel A of table 6 shows that when all resident mothers and nonresident fathers in the NSFH are compared, the groups appear to be very different on variables such as contact with the children and the payment of child support. The differences in panel A, however, conflate differences in the success of listing households and obtaining participation with differences in response error between the two groups.

When the authors select only respondents whose children were born in a first marriage (panel B), however, the mothers and fathers are much more similar in background characteristics such as race and whether the father has remarried, as well as characteristics such as the frequency of father's visits with the child and the presence of conflict over the children. The contrast between panel A and panel B suggests that for other subgroups (for example, nonmarital families) the processes selecting respondents into the sample (e.g., contacting and persuading the respondent to participate) differ more for fathers and mothers than they do for the subgroup in panel B.

Comment. In many ways the issues discussed above—particularly the issue of survey participation—are the most fundamental methodological affecting our understanding of fathers and mothers in separated families and the different views afforded by samples of each. In addition, what we observe about measurement error (which we discuss next) is "nested within" nonparticipation error (see Alwin 1991). That is, any conclusions about relative levels of measurement error for mothers and fathers are affected by the different levels and structures of nonparticipation for the two groups.

THE ACCURACY OF REPORTS: ERRORS OF OBSERVATION

If fathers and mothers from separated families see the world in different ways, this should be apparent in the different levels of measurement errors for the two groups. There are several types of reporting issues that could be of concern in studying the role of fathers in separated families. First, there is the accuracy of mothers' and fathers' reports about common events, such as the payment of

child support, dates of marriage and divorce, and so on. Second, there is the issue of the quality of one parent's reports about characteristics of the other, such as education, employment status, and income. Third, there is the issue of the comparability of mothers' and fathers' evaluations or judgments about their situation, for example, their views of the fairness of the award, the adequacy of arrangements for access, and so on. Our review of the accuracy of reports is concerned only with the first of these issues, and we consider reports about two different topics: child support transfers and contact between nonresident parents and their children. For the topic of child support payments, we review recent work based on information-processing models to discuss sources of response error.

Parents' Reports about Child Support. A discussion of reporting errors by fathers and mothers can focus either on the relative contribution of response errors to the total error in survey estimates, or on the relative accuracy of matched mothers and fathers who are, in principle, reporting about the same amounts. Each of these questions is important; they are simply different. The first approach accepts that screening issues and participation rates may differ for fathers and mothers in actual samples and estimates the net contribution of reporting errors to total survey error. This approach is illustrated in table 5. The second approach asks whether, among those who are interviewed, fathers or mothers are, on average, more accurate reporters. Matched samples of mothers and fathers are needed to address this question, but as we have seen, matched samples of fathers and mothers are subject to high levels of nonresponse. Comparisons of matched mothers and fathers assume that the effects of nonparticipation on estimates of relative response error are nil. But if, as we have argued above, the processes leading to participation are correlated with the processes leading to payment of child support (or other survey variables), matched samples, in effect, select on an endogenous variable. Agreement between fathers' and mothers' reports (and between both and court records, where applicable) may in fact be higher for these highly selected matched samples than for the sample as a whole.

Table 5 illustrates the first approach to estimating the relative impact of response error for fathers and mothers on estimates of the mean amount of child support paid or received for calendar year 1986. The analysis indicates that the response bias component of survey bias is smaller for mothers ($264) than fathers ($826). Table 7 shows revised estimates that exclude amounts that parents reported were paid directly to the other parent without going through the court, and for which the court records cannot be an adequate criterion. The results in table 7 indicate that excluding these amounts substantially reduces the estimates of total bias and of response bias: the estimated response bias for mothers is reduced to nil (from $264 to $1), and that for fathers is cut approximately in half (from $826 to $465). The results in table 5 and table 7 suggest that in this sample of court cases, there is less total nonsampling bias in the estimates of means based on mothers' reports than in those based on fathers', and the contribution of response bias to that total bias is only substantial for fathers. For mothers, the contribution of response bias to total bias is less than 1 percent (1/283); for fathers it is 40 percent (465/1155).

The estimates in table 5 and table 7 do not address the question of whether matched fathers or mothers are more accurate, on average, when they are reporting about the same amount. This topic is investigated by Sonenstein and Calhoun (1988) using data from SOAP. Table 8 presents average amounts of child support owed and paid reported by a sample from the child support enforcement

office (CSE) and by a sample from court records by state and parental status. The table also shows the mean amounts of support recorded in the court records for these couples. Panel A suggests that, overall, means of amounts owed calculated from self reports are similar for custodial and noncustodial parents, and means for both groups of parents are similar to means calculated from court records. In two of the four comparisons between custodial and noncustodial parents in panel A the difference in the mean amount owed calculated for custodial and noncustodial parents is trivially small; in the remaining two cases the mean amount reported by custodial parents is greater than the mean amount reported by noncustodial parents. In panel B, however, the mean amounts of child support paid are consistently lower when reported by custodial than by noncustodial parents. It is difficult to draw conclusions about the relative accuracy of the two groups of parents, because the court record in Ohio and Florida, the states from which the SOAP sample was drawn, does not seem to have been a very accurate criterion at the time the SOAP data were collected, when the practice of making child support payments through the court had been recently instituted and payments were not yet all made through the court. However, the direction of the difference between custodial and noncustodial parents' reports about support paid is consistent with that reported by Schaeffer, Seltzer, and Klawitter (1991), using data from Wisconsin, where the practice of paying through the court was established and appears to have been effective.

According to the self-reports of participants in the Arizona Noncustodial Parent Project, the court records were apparently also an inadequate criterion for child support payments in Maricopa County in 1986 (see Braver, Fitzpatrick, and Bay 1991, p. 182), and so the authors compare the means computed for fathers and mothers in this sample only with each other (see table 9). For the matched sample, the estimate of the mean amount of child support owed based on noncustodial parents' reports is $238 higher than that based on custodial parents' reports, while the mean amount of support paid is $837 higher based on custodial parents' reports.[10]

For the matched sample of divorced parents from the PSID analyzed by Smock and Manning (1996), table 10 shows that the differences in the means of the amount of child support paid reported by resident and nonresident parents are quite small, regardless of whether reports of payments of 0 are included or excluded.

The Wisconsin CRD and PS2 provide a more complete look at the issue of whether fathers or mothers report more accurately about child support. With these data it is possible to examine means computed from the full sample, the matched sample, and the court record. Table 11 illustrates the effects of conflating nonparticipation and response errors.[11] When the full sample is examined, the difference between the means computed from the survey reports of payers and the survey reports of receivers is $977 ($3841-$2864). Comparing each of the PS2 means computed for the full sample to the mean for the group computed from the CRD, it appears that, on average, those who pay support overreport the amount paid, while receivers slightly underreport support. The difference between the payers and receivers in this comparison is affected both by differences in which payers and receivers participated and by differences between payers and receivers in response error. The picture is different for the matched sample, however. The difference between the PS2 mean computed for payers and that for receivers is reduced to $621 ($4006-$3385). Considering only the matched sample, it appears that, on average, payers overreport and receivers very slightly underreport the amount of support. The mean for receivers is very close to the criterion mean from the CRD,[12] suggesting that when differences in nonparticipation are eliminated, receiv-

ers report quite accurately, on average.

Although the small number of existing studies that have a criterion available use diverse sampling strategies and present different types of analyses, the comparisons possible using published data suggest that for divorced parents, reports about support owed are more similar for nonresident fathers and resident mothers than reports about support paid. As Schaeffer, Seltzer, and Klawitter (1991) argue, this finding suggests that something affects responses about support paid differently for mothers and fathers that does not affect reports about support owed. If one assumes that both fathers and mothers define "child support" in the same way when reporting about support owed and support paid, then the most likely explanations for the differences in reporting error are that nonresident fathers know about money they pay to support their children that resident mothers do not know about, or that nonresident parents report paying more child support than they do, or both.

Factors Affecting Response Errors. In social-information-processing models of the response process, reporting errors are seen as originating at several different stages in the response process: comprehension of the question, retrieval of the answer, judgment about the adequacy of the answer, and reporting. Two recent studies have applied these models to studying response errors in reports about child support by comparing answers in the PS1 and PS2 to information in the CRD (for details, see Schaeffer 1994; Dykema 1996). The surveys used different strategies to ask about child support owed and paid: PS1 asked for calendar year totals (as do the CPS and most other surveys). The PS2 asked for month-by-month reports for the calendar year reference period. Each survey interviewed both mothers and fathers from the court cases.

The theory underlying the analyses of these data is that response errors increase as the phenomenon being reported about becomes more complex. Thus, in the case of child support payments, response errors are to some extent a function of the social processes that make payment patterns simple (such as no payments at all or very regular payments that are always for the amount owed) or complex (irregular payments or varying amounts). One result would be that errors and true values would be correlated, although not necessarily in a simple linear fashion. Reporting errors made by individual respondents are estimated by comparing answers in the surveys about the amount of support paid or received with information recorded by the court. The court's records also provide independent variables for the analysis, such as information about whether child support payments were made for all, some, or none of the months in the reference period. These analyses assume that the court's information is an accurate criterion that can be used to estimate the reporting errors. Although this appears to be a strong assumption, the impact of the assumption on these analyses is reduced by including measures of the accuracy of the CRD criterion (e.g., whether the court allowed the parents to exchange child support privately rather than through the court) in the analysis.

Analysis of the response errors made by divorced resident mothers in the PS1 indicates that approximately one third reported an amount of child support received within $100 of the amount recorded in the CRD; a third of the sample made overreports (compared to the CRD) and a third provided underreports. The analysis predicting absolute errors finds, for example, that reports are least accurate when support is paid some months during the reference period (as compared with no months or all months), when alimony is also paid (and mothers may be unsure whether to count money they receive as alimony or child support), when the court forwards some or all of the child support payment to the social services agency rather than to the mother (this happens when the

mother receives AFDC), and when some other types of transfers (such as health insurance) are also involved. Social characteristics of respondents have little effect on reporting errors once characteristics of the pattern of actual payments are taken into account.

Table 12 illustrates some of the complexities involved in analyzing response errors as well as some of the reasons for concern about the impact of errors on model estimation. For parents who receive no support (according to the CRD), response errors in the PS1 can only be positive; that is, if a parent reports receiving any support, her answer is necessarily greater than the amount recorded by the court. In contrast, for those who received payments in all twelve months of the reference period, the average error is negative.

Issues raised by the social-information-processing models of response error described above are addressed in table 13, which shows an extension of this analysis using the PS1. This analysis broadens the PS1 model to include additional measures and compares factors affecting absolute response errors for payers and receivers (see Dykema 1996 for details of the sample and definitions of the variables). A tobit regression model is used because it takes account of the distribution of the dependent variable, in which there is censoring. In many respects the results are very similar for payers (approximately 95 percent are fathers) and receivers (approximately 93 percent are mothers): for example, complex payment patterns, payments of alimony, and presence of withholding due to delinquency in the life of the case are all associated with increased errors for both groups. As expected, receivers for whom the court forwards payments to social services (because the parent receives AFDC), are less accurate than other receivers; but this factor does not affect the accuracy of payers. Some other notable differences are the impact of dissatisfaction with the amount of child support actually paid or received; this evaluation does not affect reporting errors for receivers, but dissatisfaction is associated with increased reporting errors for payers. Women appear to report more accurately than men, whether they pay or receive support.

One use of such models is to provide insight into possible patterns of error for other important variables for which no criterion is available, such as contact between a nonresident parent and the children.

Contact. Contact between nonresident parents and their children is, like payments of child support, a measure with important uses for both family sociologists and policy makers. It is an outcome predicted by models of the likely effects of policy changes, such as more rigorous child support enforcement. Contact between nonresident parents and children may also be an independent variable used to predict child well-being or other outcomes.

Like reports about child support payments, reports about contact can be examined in many ways. Returning to panel A of table 6, it is apparent that one would come to different conclusions about the level of contact between nonresident parents and their children if one examined the answers of resident mothers and nonresident fathers in the NSFH. As our previous discussion indicated, however, the differences apparent in panel A confound differences in screening, participation, and response between the two groups. In panel B, which selects (on an "independent" variable) a subsample of mothers and fathers defined so that screening and participation rates are likely to be more similar, the important measure of the frequency of the father's visits with the child is substantially identical for fathers and mothers. For the proportion with extended visits, the selected subsample shows a higher level of visitation than the achieved sample as a whole, but fathers are

still more likely to report extended visits than mothers.

Braver, Wolchik, Sandler, Fogas, and Zvetina (1991) compare reports about contact for matched pairs of noncustodial fathers and custodial mothers (see table 14). They find that the level of contact reported by fathers is higher on every measure than that reported by mothers. The measures used to obtain these reports asked for "average" levels of contact or about the previous month (see Braver, Wolchik, Sandler, Fogas, and Zvetina 1991, p. 450). In his analysis of unmatched parents from the NLSY, Veum (1993) finds that mothers report less contact (an average of 46 days) than fathers (61 days).

Tuschen (1994) analyzed reports about contact in the PS2 that asked for month-by-month reports for the previous calendar year. Some results for the unmatched sample and matched sample are reported in table 15. In response to an open question that asked the respondent to describe the children's living arrangements, mothers are more likely than fathers to say that the children "live" with the mother, but the difference is greater for the unmatched sample than for the (more selective) matched sample. Similarly, mothers report that the children spend more nights with the mother than fathers do, but the difference in means is substantially smaller among the matched sample. These comparisons between the unmatched and matched samples indicate that differences in the composition of the group of mothers and the group of fathers who were interviewed affects comparisons using the full sample. Differences between reports in the matched sample are likely to be due to response differences. Sources of these response differences are likely to be differences in what parents mean by "living" with a parent, as well as the influence of factors such as memory decay and social desirability.

CONCLUSION

Much of what we know about separated families has been based on reports of mothers in surveys. Relying on mothers' reports appears particularly problematic when separated families are studied. Certainly, the range of viewpoints and opinions held by fathers can only be described by talking with fathers, and such data are crucial for describing the relationship between how fathers' view their situation (for example, how fair they see a child support order being) and accompanying behavior (for example, whether child support is actually paid). But the findings reviewed here point to some of the challenges that arise when attempting to describe fathers' points of view using survey data. The most obvious is the challenge of improving participation rates among both fathers and mothers, but particularly among fathers, and particularly among some subgroups of fathers, such as those who do not pay support. Nonparticipation bias is clearly an important issue for some estimates, such as the mean amount of child support paid. Although the evidence is less conclusive, it appears that nonparticipation bias may be less of a problem in estimating relationships among variables.

In addition to the problems raised by nonparticipation, the studies reviewed here suggest that for some variables, such as amounts of child support paid, response error may be more serious for fathers than for mothers. In part because social desirability pressures appear to contribute to this response error, it is plausible that response errors affect constructs such as "contact" for which we do not have a criterion in the same way that they affect constructs for which a criterion is available. Research using social-information-processing models to study response errors may suggest ways to improve the accuracy of answers provided by both fathers and mothers. It should be noted that

none of the studies reviewed here estimate the impact of response errors on model estimates, but such effects can be expected to be substantial (see, for example, Rodgers, Brown, and Duncan 1993).

Most of the research summarized here uses information about divorced families, but some evidence suggests that problems of nonparticipation may be greater for nonmarital families than for divorced families. In addition, response errors may be greater for nonmarital families as a whole than for divorced families, particularly if, for example, child support payments are more irregular or for varying amounts. Eliciting accurate responses from such a diverse subgroup is a challenge for future methodological research.

Finally, it is worth bearing in mind that the problems of nonparticipation and response error are not restricted to surveys. Although the structure of survey data makes it relatively easy to study such problems, other types of investigations—including ethnography and focus group research—are subject to similar errors, even when they cannot be estimated..

NOTES

[1] In the usage of this paper, a "family" consists of parents and children, regardless of whether the parents married or the children live with one or both parents. Thus, we refer to "separated families" in which the children do not live with both parents. We recognize, however, that parents and children may define "family" in other ways.

[2] Researchers using household samples sometimes report a "completion rate" that divides the number of interviewed households by the number of households screened as eligible. Such a completion rate ignores cases that were lost to the sample because they were not screened, and thus probably overestimates the true completion rate.

[3] This awkward wording can be found in such screening questions.

[4] For example, Cherlin, Griffith, and McCarthy (1983, p. 385) report that the 1980 CPS asked of a household informant, "Does [the man] have any children from a previous marriage who are less than 18 years old?" If the man was reported to have children, the informant was asked if the children usually lived somewhere else.

[5] O'Neill (1985, p. 5) also concludes, in her analysis of the CPS, that more women than men report having children from a disrupted marriage. She attributes a little more than half of the difference to the failure of fathers to identify themselves and about 10 percent of the difference to the failure to interview institutionalized men. Similarly, in his analysis of the NLSY, Veum (1993) concludes that males may be less likely to report about children not living in the household than women are to report children with fathers who live elsewhere.

[6] Although respondents in RDD designs need not be located, it is necessary to determine whether selected telephone numbers are nonworking numbers, businesses, or otherwise ineligible.

[7] We obtain the first estimate by dividing the 179 cases in the analysis of matched custodial and noncustodial parents (Braver, Fitzpatrick, and Bay 1991) by 866 selected cases, minus 149 known ineligibles. The second estimate removes an estimated 54 ineligible cases from among those not located from the denominator. This is the procedure Braver and Bay (1992) use for estimating the response rate for fathers. We could not locate a published response rate for mothers, but it appears that for the first part of the study mothers were interviewed only if the father was interviewed, and so the response rate for mothers must be lower than that for fathers.

[8] The response rate for couples was estimated by dividing the interviewed 177 matched cases reported by Sorenstein and Calhoun (1988, p. 27) by the 383 net sample cases reported by Rubin, O'Brien, and Sudman (1988, p. 54).

[9] For the Stanford Child Custody Study, Maccoby and Mnookin (1992, p. 321-322) also report that those "recruited" into their court-based sample are similar to those who were eligible but were not recruited, in terms of the likelihood of having an award and the mean amount of the award.

[10] Because in the first part of their field period the Arizona Noncustodial Parent Project interviewed mothers only if the father had already been interviewed, the custodial parents who appear in the column headed "All Custodial" are partially a dependent sample (see Bay and Braver 1990, p. 383).

[11] In Veum's (1993) analysis of the unmatched parents in NLSY, he finds that the mean amount of child support received reported by mothers is $433, compared to a mean amount of child support paid reported by fathers of $913. The difference between these reports reflects both differences in the types of mothers and fathers who participated and differences between mothers and fathers in response error.

[12] When a mother receives AFDC, the court forwards some of the payment to the social services agency. Table 11 includes this amount in the CRD mean for payers but not for receivers. This assumes that payers are reporting about the amount they *paid* rather than the amount the receivers *received*. The amount forwarded to social services is excluded from the CRD mean for receivers, under the assumption that they are reporting about what they received rather than what the payer paid.

TABLES

Table 1. Comparison of Number (in Thousands) of Men and Women Reporting Children from a Previous Marriage According to Support Status

Men	
Reported to have children under 18 from previous marriage living elsewhere	3,382
Reported providing financial support to children living elsewhere[a]	2,605 (77.1%)
Women	
Reporting children under 21 from previous marriage living in household	5,720
Reporting receipt of child support payments in 1978[a]	2,368 (41.4%)

Source: Cherlin, Griffith, and McCarthy (1983), Table 1. Data for the men are from June 1980 CPS Public Use Tape; data for the women are from U.S. Bureau of the Census (1981, Table 1).

[a] Number who reported providing or receiving support "regularly," "occasionally," or "seldom."

Table 2. CHIPPS Subsamples by Interview Type

	Cross-Section		Extended Sample		Both Phases	
Type of Parent Interviewed	N	%	N	%	N	%
Custodial	80	7.5	308	6.7	388	6.8
Noncustodial	37	3.5	136	3.0	173	3.1
Both	14	1.2	38	0.8	52	0.9
Proxy for custodial	2	0.2	2	0.1	4	0.1
Other*	940	87.6	4,121	89.4	5,061	89.1
	1,073	100.0	4,605	100.0	5,678	100.0

Source: MacDonald (1986), Table 3. Data are from Wisconsin CHIPPS.

*For the cross-section these are households that provided the entire interview. In the extended sample this is the count of those respondents who completed only the screening sections of the interview.

Table 3. Child Support Variables from the Court Record Data and Parent Survey, by Final Disposition

Final Disposition	CRD Dollars of Child Support Paid Mean	(SD)	PS1 Dollars of Child Support Paid Mean	(SD)	N
Divorced resident mothers					
Final refusal	3355	(6691)	—		122
Hard temporary refusal	3779	(5389)	3809	(5094)	37
Soft temporary refusal	2997	(3113)	3511	(4046)	35
Interviewed, easy to locate	2479	(4015)	2854	(3979)	848
Interviewed, hard to locate	1649	(2377)	2374	(2518)	39
Unlocated, at least one number found	1386	(2289)	—		187
Unlocated, no numbers found	1897	(3385)	—		107
Total sample	2387	(4117)	2897	(3988)	1375
N[a]	1375		841		
Divorced nonresident fathers					
Final refusal	2520	(3171)	—		179
Hard temporary refusal	3435	(5525)	5167	(9274)	45
Soft temporary refusal	2247	(2831)	3009	(3053)	46
Interviewed, easy to locate	2807	(4847)	3578	(4715)	651
Interviewed, hard to locate	2342	(3153)	3533	(4311)	35
Unlocated, at least one number found	1560	(2807)	—		274
Unlocated, no numbers found	1500	(3281)	—		133
Total sample	2381	(4121)	3622	(4953)	1363
N[a]	1363		721		

Source: Lin and Schaeffer (1995), Table 1. Data are from Wisconsin Parent Survey 1.

Note. Cell entries are means and standard deviations (in parentheses) of the column variables. Cases for which four or more telephone numbers were obtained before the respondent was located are classified as "hard to locate." The reference period for all variables is 1986. CRD analysis is based on 1386 cases; PS analysis is based on 964 divorced resident mothers and 786 divorced nonresident fathers. Analysis excludes 11 mothers and 23 fathers with final disposition of "other."
[a] The number of cases in some columns is slightly less than the total analytic sample because of missing data.NR_M01, NR_F01 15 JAN 95

Table 4. Means and Results of Contrast

	Interviewed	n	Not Located	n	Refused	n	F
Panel A: Variables from Petitions							
Number of children	1.8	340	1.7	231	1.7	146	2.15
Proportion of boys	.55	340	.54	229	.51	144	2.37
Number of boys	.94	340	.92	229	.93	144	2.12
Average age of children	5.9	325	5.2	220	7.4	142	1.17
Age of oldest child	6.9	325	6.1	220	8.5	142	1.02
Age of youngest child	4.9	325	4.2	220	6.2	142	1.17
Children's age range	2.1	325	1.9	220	2.4	142	2.05
Children's age variance	7.0	182	6.5	115	8.7	80	2.44
Panel B: Continuous Variables from Divorce Decrees							
Days between petition and decree	166	283	132	72	157	75	3.90*
Child support owed (total)	283	266	252	65	263	70	1.36
Child support owed (per child)	174	266	161	63	160	70	1.36
Alimony owed	32	277	41	73	3	72	2.32
Years of marriage	8.6	325	7.4	95	11.2	78	1.79
Mother's age	30.5	237	28.4	92	32.1	81	2.15
Father's age	32.9	323	31.2	87	32.1	49	2.50

Source: Braver and Bay (1992), Tables 1 and 3. Data are from Maricopa County, Arizona. *$p < .05$.

Table 5. Estimates of Error in the Parent Survey as Compared to the Court Record Data for Amount of Child Support Paid, in Dollars,Reports of Divorced Resident Mothers and Nonresident Fathers

	Sampling Error					Estimates of Bias								
						Total Nonsampling								
	Population CRD_0	PS Sample, CRD_1	PS Participants CRD_2	PS Item Respondents CRD_3	PS_1 Respondents, PS_1	Sample-Specific Standard Error	Total Nonsampling: CRD_1 vs. CRD_0	Total Response: PS_1 vs. CRD_1	Item Nonresponse: PS_1 vs. CRD_3	Non-participation: CRD_1 vs. CRD_2	CRD_2 vs. CRD_4	Bias Ratio	PS Non-participant, CRD_4	PS Item Non-respondents, CRD_5
Resident Mothers														
Mean	2767	2763	2895	3045	3309	146	4	546	264	150	132	3.74	2467	2180
SD	3884	4087	3962	4198	4071	1.05	1.00	.97	1.05	.97			4345	2448
N	1828	1356	938	775	775								418	163
Nonresident Fathers														
Mean	2767	2763	3213	3453	4279	203	4	1516	826	240	450	7.47	2185	1846
SD	3884	4087	4671	4950	5154	1.05	1.26	1.04	1.05	1.14			3091	2296
N	1828	1356	763	646	646								593	117

Source: Wisconsin PS1, Schaeffer, Seltzer, and Klawitter (1991), Table 4. Data are from Wisconsin Court Recrod Database and Parent Survey 1.

Note: Columns headed "Sampling Error" show the standard error calculated from the Parent Survey and the deviation of the mean CRD value in the sample from that in the population. Columns headed "Estimates of Bias" show differences for means and ratios for standard deviations. The bias ratio is estimated as the total nonsampling bias divided by the standard error. Data are from a sample of divorce cases in Wisconsin. Resident status of parents is based on the CRD. Cases with private payment agreements are excluded. PS_1 includes amounts parents report they exchanged directly. Reference period for the variables is 1986.

Table 6. Selected Characteristics of Resident Mothers and Nonresident Fathers

	Respondent				
	Resident Mother		Nonresident Father		Statistical Significance
Panel A: All Resident Mothers and Nonresident Fathers					
Relationship after separation					**
Frequency of father's visits with child:					
not at all	29.1%		19.7%		
once a year	11.2		8.0		
several times a year	17.6		18.3		
1 to 3 times a month	15.6		21.6		
once a week	12.1		16.7		
several times a week	14.4		15.8		
	100	(1,492)	100	(468)	
Father has extended visits, for those with any visits	28.6%	(921)	43.4%	(343)	***
Any child support paid/received in past year	45.8%	(1,420)	77.4%	(425)	***
Mean monthly payment, if any	$187	(610)	$221	(288)	n.s.
Parents have conflict about the children	47.9%	(1,485)	57.4%	(460)	**
Panel B: Resident Mothers and Nonresident Fathers of Random Children Born in First Marriages					
Relationship after separation					
Frequency of father's visits with child:					
not at all	18.7%		17.4%		n.s.
once a year	12.8		7.7		
several times a year	21.7		18.4		
1 to 3 times a month	22.7		24.0		
once a week	12.8		16.8		
several times a week	11.2		15.6		
	100	(677)	100	(222)	
Father has extended visits, for those with any visits	36.3%	(476)	52.6%	(171)	**
Number of extended visits, if any:					
1	32.1%		18.9%		n.s.
2	25.1		19.6		
3+	42.9		61.6		
	100	(167)	100	(88)	
Any child support paid/received in past year	63.8%	(636)	85.8%	(200)	***
Mean monthly payment, if any	$222	(396)	$265	(168)	n.s.
Parents have conflict about the children	57.0%	(674)	60.2%	(219)	n.s.

Source: Seltzer and Brandreth (1995), Tables 9.1 and 9.2. Data are from the National Survey of Families and Households, Wave 1, 1987-1988.

Note: Statistics use weighted data. Unweighted numbers of cases in parentheses. Tests of statistical significance use weighted data to take account of double sampling for specific subgroups. Column totals may not equal 100% because of rounding error.
*p _6 < .05; **p _6 < .01; ***p _6 < .001.

Table 7. Estimates of Response Bias in the Parent Survey as Compared to the Court Record Data for Amount of Child Support Paid, in Dollars, Excluding Direct Payments, Reports of Divorced Resident Mothers and Nonresident Fathers

		Estimates of Bias		
	PS Item Respondents, Bias: PS_3	Total Nonsampling Bias: PS_3 vs. CRD_1	Total Response Bias: PS_3 vs. CRD_3	Bias Ratio
Resident Mothers				
Mean	3046	283	1	1.94
SD	4042	.99	.96	
N	775			
Nonresident Fathers				
Mean	3918	1155	465	5.69
SD	5070	1.24	1.02	
N	646			

Source: Schaeffer, Seltzer, and Klawitter (1991), Table 5. Data are from the Wisconsin Court Record Database (CRD) and Parent Survey 1 (PS1).

Note: Columns headed "Estimates of Bias" show differences for means and ratios for standard deviations. The bias ratio is estimated as the total nonsampling bias divided by the standard error. Data are from a sample of divorce cases in Wisconsin. Resident status of parents is based on the CRD. Cases with private payment agreements are excluded. PS_3 excludes amounts parents report they exchange directly. Reference period for the variables is 1986.

Table 8. Child Support Matched Sample, Cases with Support Orders

	Florida CSE Sample	Court Sample	Ohio CSE Sample	Court Sample
Panel A: Average annual support order in dollars (N = 203)				
Custodial parent	1,811	2,902	2,509	3,344
Noncustodial parent	1,672	2,906	2,526	2,846
Court record information	1,869	3,212	2,312	3,019
N	53	41	57	52
Panel B: Average annual payments in dollars (N = 177)				
Custodial parent report	1,002	2,255	1,322	2,651
Noncustodial parent report	1,410	3,085	1,729	2,881
In case record[a]	1,206	1,582	1,637	1,359
N	47	41	39	50

Source: SOAP, Sonenstein and Calhoun (1988), Tables 3.5 and 3.6. Data are from Survey of Absent Parents.

[a]Not all respondents paid through court or other agency.

Table 9. Child Support Paid, by Reporter

	All Noncustodial (n = 274)	Matched Noncustodial (n = 179)	Matched Custodial (n = 179)	All Custodial (n = 247)
Average amount paid	$3,277	$3,555	$2,718	$2,346
Average amount owed	$3,537	$3,930	$3,692	$3,282

Source: Braver, Fitzpatrick, and Bay (1991), Table 2. Data are from Maricopa County study; cases were sampled in 1986.

Table 10. Means of Child Support Reported Received and Paid (Standard Deviations in Parentheses)

Reported by residential parent:	
Proportion receiving child support	.52
Amount Received (including 0's)	$2,523 (11,525)
Amount Received (excluding 0's)	$4,615 (12,406)
Reported by nonresidential parent:	
Proportion paying child support	.55
Amount Paid (including 0's)	$2,539 (13,227)
Amount Paid (excluding 0's)	$4,911 (14,900)
N	219

Source: Smock and Manning (1996), Table 1. Data are from Panel Study of Income Dynamics.

Note: Weighted means and unweighted N's.

Table 11. Mean Amount of Child Support Paid, by Reporter and Court Record

	Payers				Receivers			
	Full Sample (n = 606)		Matched Sample (N = 438)		Full Sample (n = 737)		Matched Sample (n = 438)	
	PS2	CRD	PS2	CRD	PS2	CRD	PS2	CRD
Average amount paid	$3841	$3508	$4006	$3656	$2864	$2933	$3385	$3415

Source: Unpublished data. Survey data are from the Parent Survey 2 (PS2); court record data are from the Wisconsin Court Record Database (CRD). Payers are divorced parents (95% fathers) who paid or were supposed to pay child support in 1988; receivers are divorced parents (93% mothers) who received or were supposed to receive child support in 1988. A small number of respondents who were supposed to pay and receive child support were assigned to the payer category if they were fathers and the receiver category if they were mothers. Payments that the court forwarded to the social services agency are included in the CRD amount for payers, but not for receivers.

Table 12. Means of Errors and True Values by Complexity (Frequency or Regularity) of Dollars of Support Paid

	Months of Support Paid (CRD)		
Variable and Statistic Support Paid	None	Some	All
Mean of errors (PS - CRD)	1413	122	-506
Standard deviation	2628	2569	3706
Mean support paid (CRD)	0	2488	5375
Standard deviation	0	2906	5217
N	162	393	287

Source: Schaeffer (1994), Table 9.4. Data are from the Wisconsin Court Record Database and Parent Survey 1. Respondents are divorced mothers who had physical custody during most of 1986.

Note: Cell entries were calculated in the original metric and statistics are rounded to the nearest dollar.

Table 13. Multivariate Tobit Regression Models for Errors in Reports about Child Support on Characteristics of the Respondent, Method and Event

Independent Variables	Receivers			Payers		
	b	*(se)*	e^b	*b*	*(se)*	e^b
Complexity						
Number of Payments (0-1 Payments)						
2-3 Payments	2.838**	(.537)	17.082	2.858**	(.782)	17.427
4-12 Payments	2.955**	(.430)	19.202	1.898**	(.481)	6.672
Monthly Payment Pattern (Regular)						
Semi-regular	0.532*	(.257)	1.702	1.493**	(.276)	4.450
Irregular	-1.173**	(.413)	0.309	0.387	(.422)	1.473
Metric (Monthly/Semi-monthly)						
No Metric Available	0.293	(.456)	1.340	-0.551	(.571)	0.576
Metric Changed	0.881**	(.270)	2.413	-0.067	(.292)	0.935
Weekly/Biweekly	0.856**	(.246)	3.353	0.792*	(.272)	2.208
Number of Changes in Amount Paid	0.169**	(.041)	1.184	0.191**	(.045)	1.210
Multiple of Constant (vs. Not)	-0.186	(.385)	0.830	-0.415	(.411)	0.660
Distinctness						
Private Agreement (vs. None)	1.273*	(.558)	3.572	1.113	(.714)	3.043
Informal Agreement (vs. None)	0.042	(.329)	1.043	0.661*	(.350)	1.937
Direct Payment (vs. None)	2.440**	(.434)	11.473	0.383	(.292)	1.467
Clarity						
Some Alimony Paid (vs. None)	0.724*	(.394)	2.063	0.860*	(.388)	2.363
Health Ins. Provided by Other Parent or Both Parents (vs. R Only/Neither)	0.206	(.216)	1.229	0.552*	(.260)	1.737
Received/Paid Mortgage/Rent (vs. Not)	0.100	(.596)	1.105	-0.237	(.383)	0.789
Received/Paid Other Contributions (vs. Not)	0.442*	(.233)	1.556	0.375	(.240)	1.455
Social Services (0 Paymnts)						
1-6 Payments	0.993**	(.342)	2.699	-0.197	(.393)	0.821
7-12 Payments	3.571**	(.418)	35.522	0.236	(.392)	1.266
Retroactive Order (vs. Not)	0.447*	(.244)	1.561	0.257	(.263)	1.293
Affect						
Satisfaction (Satisfied/Dissatisfied)						
Very Dissatisfied	0.086	(.283)	1.090	0.885**	(.256)	2.423
Very Satisfied	0.440	(.350)	1.553	0.748	(.631)	2.113
Method Factors						
Lived Together Some (vs. None)	0.013	(.367)	1.103	-0.405	(.406)	0.667
None Received to Filter (vs. Not)	-3.024**	(.499)	0.049	0.845	(.576)	2.328

(table continues on following page)

Independent Variables	*b*	*(se)*	e^b	*b*	*(se)*	e^b
Memory Decay	0.001	(.002)	1.001	0.002	(.002)	1.002
Respondent Characteristics						
Receivers:						
Male Respondent (vs. Female)	1.570**	(.497)	4.807	-0.948*	(.554)	0.388
Payers:						
Female Respondent (vs. Male)	0.025	(.016)	1.025	-0.001	(.017)	0.999
Age at Interview						
Education (Less than High School)						
High School	-0.050	(.384)	0.951	-0.152	(.418)	0.859
More than High School	-0.217	(.379)	0.805	-0.406	(.412)	0.663
Income (Logged)	-0.297*	(.122)	0.743	0.275*	(.165)	1.317
Number of Children	0.118	(.117)	1.125	0.435**	(.128)	1.545
Mother had Physical Custody (vs. Not)	2.145**	(.374)	8.542	1.879**	(.369)	6.547
Social Desirability						
Female Interviewer (vs. Male)	-0.151	(.265)	0.860	-0.088	(.345)	0.916
Delinquency Withholding (vs. Not)	0.775*	(.433)	2.171	1.093*	(.492)	2.983
Respondent Motivation						
Ever Refused (vs. Not)	-0.198	(.276)	0.820	-0.465	(.427)	0.628
Some Income not Reported (vs. All)	-0.146	(.232)	0.864	0.021	(.246)	1.021
Both Parents Interviewed (vs. One)	0.408*	(.238)	1.504	-0.075	(.267)	0.928
Interview length in top quartile (vs. Bottom 3 quartiles)	0.004	(.006)	1.004	0.003	(.006)	1.003

Source: Dykema (1996), Tables 5 and 6. Survey data are from the Wisconsin Parent Survey 2; court record data are from the (Wisconsin) Court Record Database. *Receivers* are 749 divorced parents who received or were supposed to receive child support in 1988; *Payers* are 615 divorced parents who paid or were supposed to pay child support in 1988. The dependent variable is the absolute value of the difference between the survey report and the court record, logged. A small constant was added to this value in order to obtain the log.

+ $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$
b=regression, (se)=standard error, e^b=exponentiation of regression

Table 14. Reports by Noncustodial (NCP) and Custodial (CP) Parents of NCP Contact with Children

Child-NCP Contact	Reports		Difference		
	NCP[a]	CP[a]	t	%	Correlation
Time in NCP's care (%)	16.82	12.65	2.70**	32.9	.18*
Average hours per week (no.)	16.57	13.57	2.74**	22.1	.46***
Visits last month (no.)	6.61	4.82	4.33***	37.1	.55***
Average days per month (no.)	7.51	6.14	3.39***	22.3	.54***
Average sleep-overs per month (no.)	3.07	2.54	2.56*	19.9	.59***
Longest time without visits last month (days)	6.31	8.61	-3.36***	36.5	.16*

Source: Braver, Wolchik, Sandler, Fogas, and Zventina (1991), Table 1. Data are from Maricopa County.

Note: Table footnotes made consistent with source Table 2.

[a]N = 220, t=statistic

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.

Table 15. Comparison of Mothers' and Fathers' Reports About Children's Living Arrangements

	Reporter			
	Unmatched Sample		Matched Sample	
	Mother	Father	Mother	Father
Living arrangements				
Explictly said "live with"				
Mother	68.2	47.8	64.1	50.6
Father	5.1	11.8	7.2	9.7
Other	4.4	8.0	5.1	3.9
Did not use "live with"	22.2	32.3	23.5	33.7
N	670	569	404	403
χ^2_6	61.3		17.9	
Number of nights spent with mother				
Mean	304	259	288	268
Standard deviation	88	109	96	102
N	674	572	405	405
t, p	-7.9, p < .01		-2.9, p < .01	

Source: Tuschen (1994), Tables 1 and 2. Data are from Wisconsin Parent Survey 2.

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